



# Lone Star Region

## **National Model Railroad Association**

### Introduction to Craftsman Kits

- Mike Jobe



# Intro to Craftsman Kits

- What is a Craftsman Kit?
- How to select a kit.
- Differences between manufacturers?
- What is in a kit?
- Tools you will need.
- Golden Rules
- Tips and Building techniques.





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## What is a Craftsman Kit?



# What is a craftsman kit?

That is a good question, A lot of manufacturers will call their product a craftsman kit. But typically the classic description of a craftsman kit is a structure or model kit, that is designed

and sold in a limited run, these quantities range from 1 of 10 to 1 of 1000. These are called “limited runs”.

The important thing to remember is that a craftsman kit is basically a scratch built structure where you have the benefit of the manufacturer/craftsman gathering the components for you but most importantly, he/she is teaching you his techniques in building in every step...

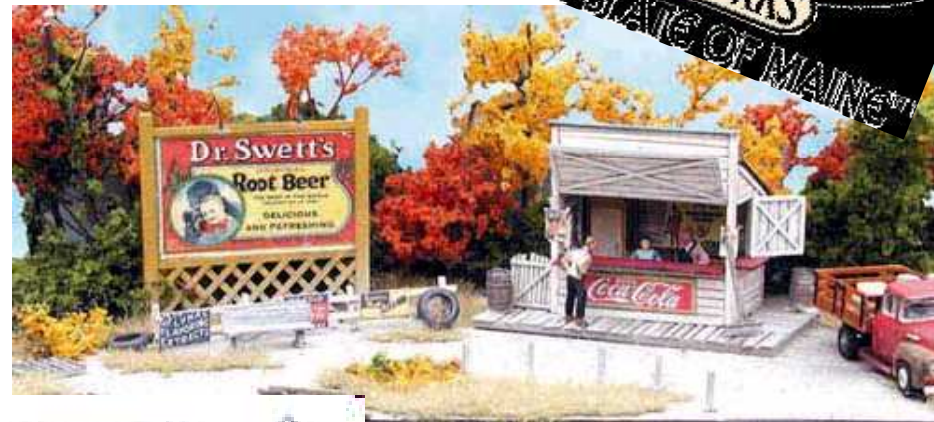
To classify them I will break them down to the following;



# What is a craftsman kit?

Basic or Beginner Kit....

- Unlimited production
- \$10.00 to \$50.00
- Simple to build
- 2 to 10 hours

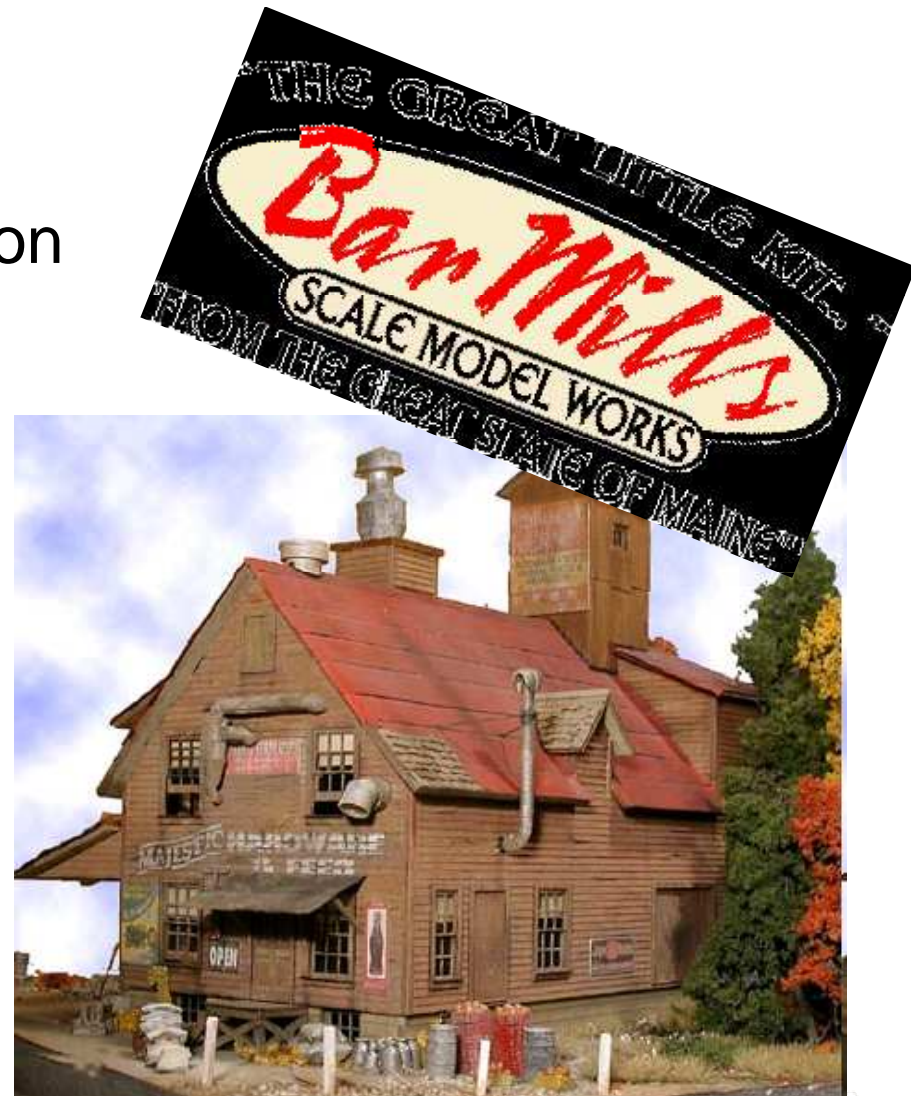




# What is a craftsman kit?

## Intermediate Kit....

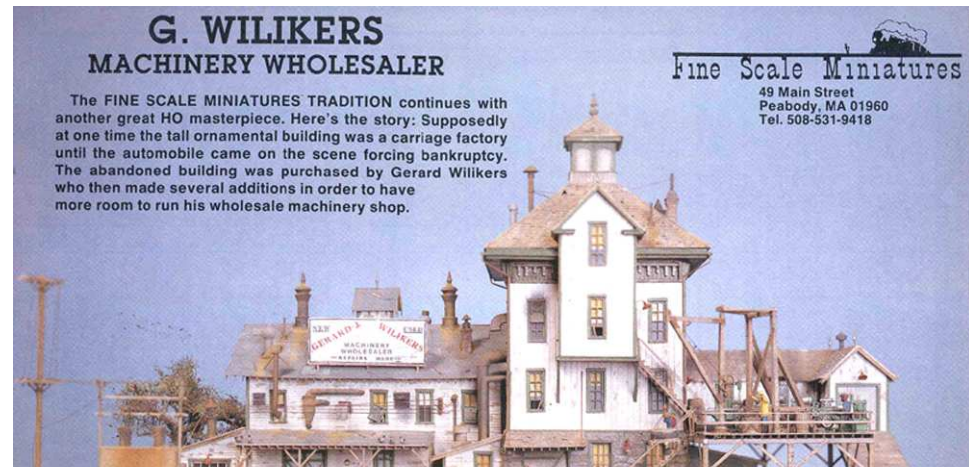
- Typically unlimited production
- \$50.00 to \$150.00
- More details
- More complex
- 10 to 100 hours



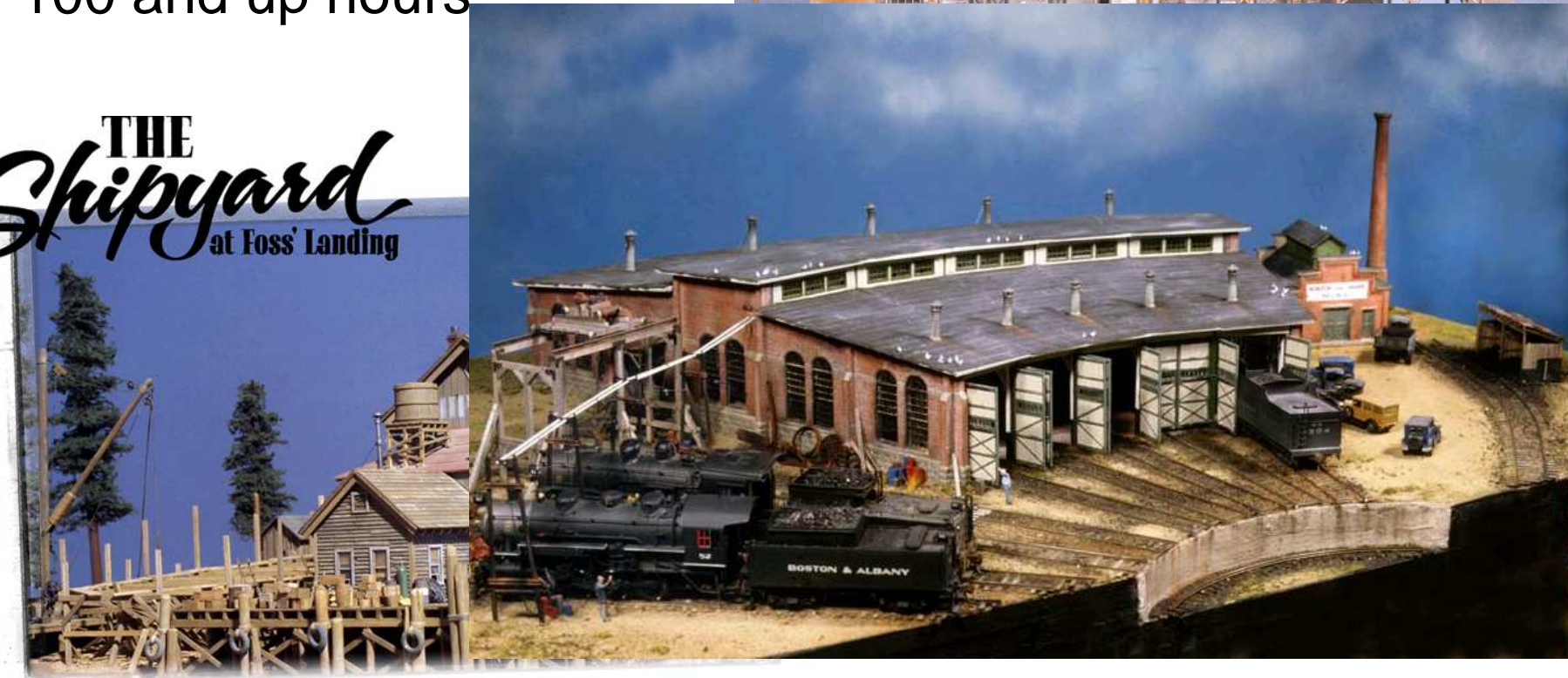
# What is a craftsman kit?

## Advanced or “Super” Kits....

- Typically limited production
- \$150 – and up
- Detail rich
- Highly complex
- 100 and up hours



**THE**  
*Shipyard*  
at Foss' Landing







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**How to select a kit?**





# How to select a kit?

What is your skill level?... Don't start off with an expensive super kit if your new at this...

What era and part of the country are you modeling?... Some kit builders focus on northeastern architecture...

How much can you afford? Sometimes kits are not readily available and are sought out by collectors thus more expensive...

Do you want a ton of detail?... Depending on the type of kit you purchase you can get little to no detail in the kit...

Do you like laser kit or board on board structures... Laser kits are easier to build but board on board can look better...



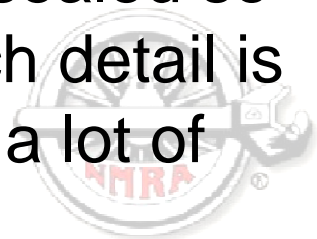
# How to select a kit?

When buying a kit, avoid brokers, they are more expensive...

If using eBay, pay with PayPal so if the goods are damaged you can get your money back

Research the builder on various kit and train forum sites, some structures look great on the box but you will want to shoot yourself by the time your done because in inaccurate instructions, poor materials etc...

When shopping at hobby shop, most boxes are sealed so you face the roll of the dice as far as how much detail is in there, a big box does not necessarily mean a lot of parts...





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## Differences between manufacturers?

**DISCLAIMER; This is my humble  
opinion, yours may vary.**



# Differences in manufacturers?

NAME	SKILL	COST	MATERIALS	INSTRUCTIONS	DETAIL	OVERALL
Fine Scale Miniatures	8	\$100 - \$600	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT
South River Models	8	\$100 - \$1500	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT
Sierra West Models	7	\$55 - \$390	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT
Foscale Limited	1 - 6	\$10 - \$300	EXCELLENT	GOOD	TYPICALLY LACKING DEPENDS ON KIT	GOOD STARTER KITS
Bar Mills	1 - 6	\$10 - \$400	EXCELLENT	GOOD	TYPICALLY LACKING DEPENDS ON KIT	GOOD STARTER KITS
Campbell Scale Models	5	\$10 - \$100	SUB STANDARD OUT OF SCALE * SEE NOTE	FAIR	POOR	GOOD STARTER KITS
Sheepscott	7	\$50 - \$250	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT



# Differences in manufacturers?

NAME	SKILL	COST	MATERIALS	INSTRUCTIONS	DETAIL	OVERALL
Master Creations	8	<b>\$100 - \$400</b>	EXCELLENT	POOR - FAIR	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT
Builders in Scale	8	<b>\$50- 400</b>	EXCELLENT	FAIR - GOOD	EXCELLENT	EXCELLENT
Suydam	5	<b>\$10 - \$60</b>	SUB STANDARD OUT OF SCALE * SEE NOTE	FAIR	POOR	GOOD STARTER KITS

Note; These manufacturers typically do not use selective compression in their designs. When placed next to another kit build, sometimes they look odd or oversized.





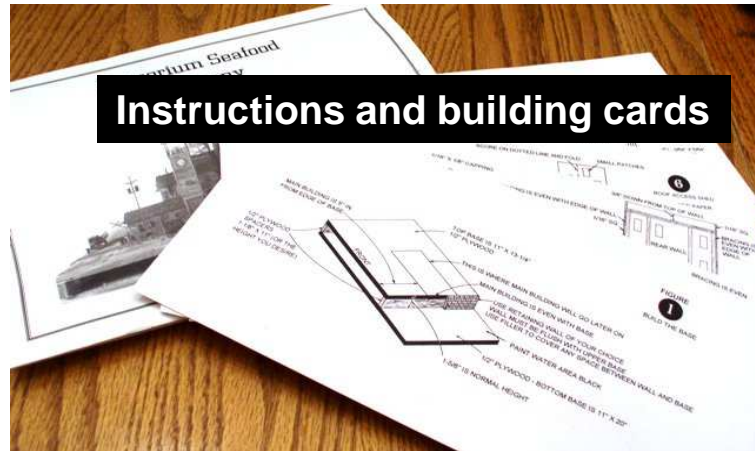
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**What is in a Kit?**



# What is in a Kit?

All kits are basically the same, they contain;



Some kits will have electronics



# What is in a Kit?

The most important things to consider;

Instructions are what really make or break your success. Poorly written instructions can spell a poor looking structure and possibly a drug habit.



Basic Materials for framing, windows, etc



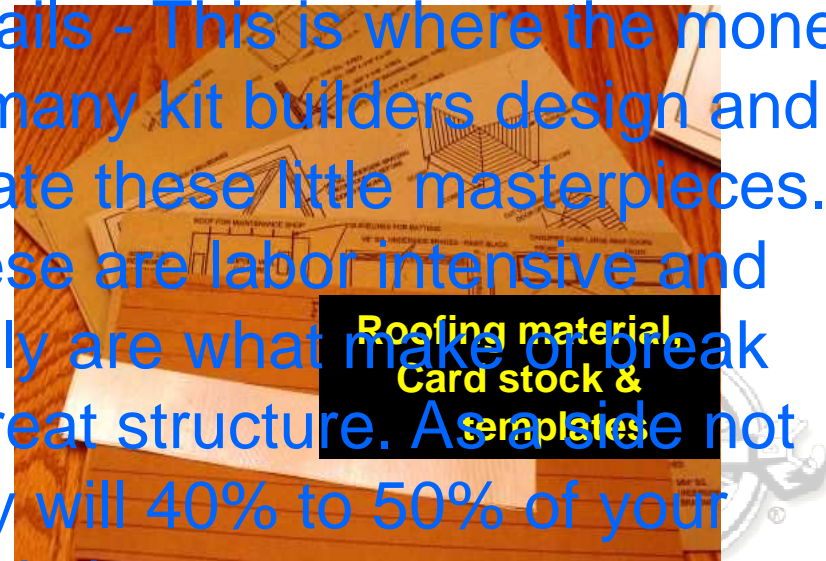
Some kits will have electronics

Detail or "Jewel Box"



Details - This is where the money is, many kit builders design and create these little masterpieces. These are labor intensive and really are what make or break a great structure. As a side note they will 40% to 50% of your build time.

Roofing material, Card stock & templates







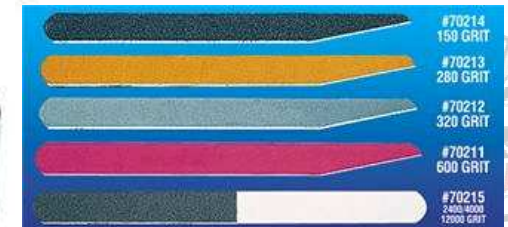
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## Tools you will need



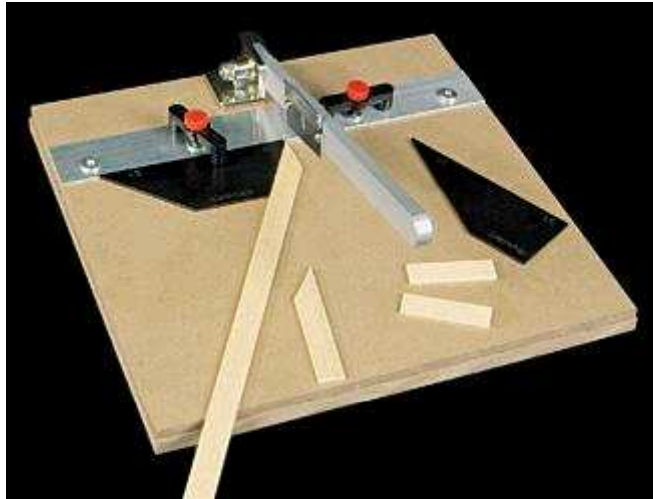
# Tools you will need.

## The Basics...

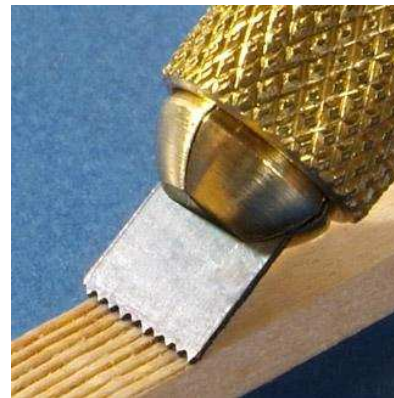
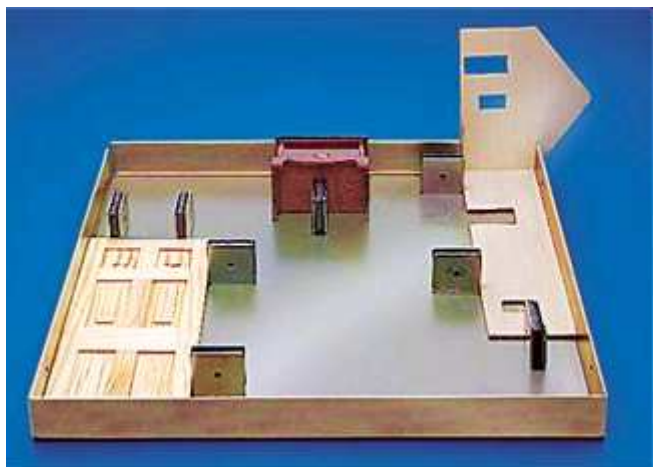


## *Tools you will need.*

### Advanced tools...



Pounce Wheel





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## Golden Rules





## Golden Rules

- **Read the instructions thoroughly.** It is tempting not too but eventually you will paint yourself into a corner.
- **Strive for Plumb, Level & Square.** One mistake now will require 2X the work to compensate later. Overall human nature is focus on the what's wrong versus everything else that is right.
- **Attempt to age and weather the model.** Even what are meant to be new buildings will not look right at smaller scales. A bright shiny building will stick out look a sore thumb. Chalks, Stains, Alcohol and Ink as well as white highlighting go a long way.
- **Always keep in mind how the building will look on the layout when it is done (the end game).** When picking colors, finishes and overall look and type, ask yourself will it blend in? A layout
- **Don't overdo it with glue.** It does not take that much, particularly once a section is built, like real structures they can be incredibly strong. Clean off excessive glue.
- **Be patient and keep organized.** Michelangelo took years to paint the Sistine Chapel... if you are tired stop for the day.



## Building Techniques & Tips



Notice how nothing pops out at you,  
everything blends together



Example of keeping the end game in mind during your build



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## Resources



## Building Techniques & Tips

Seek out other modelers and how they built thier kit...



<http://www.railroad-line.com/>

<http://kitforums.com/>



NMRA Members



<http://www.modelrailroadpodcast.com/>

There are several forums available to you....





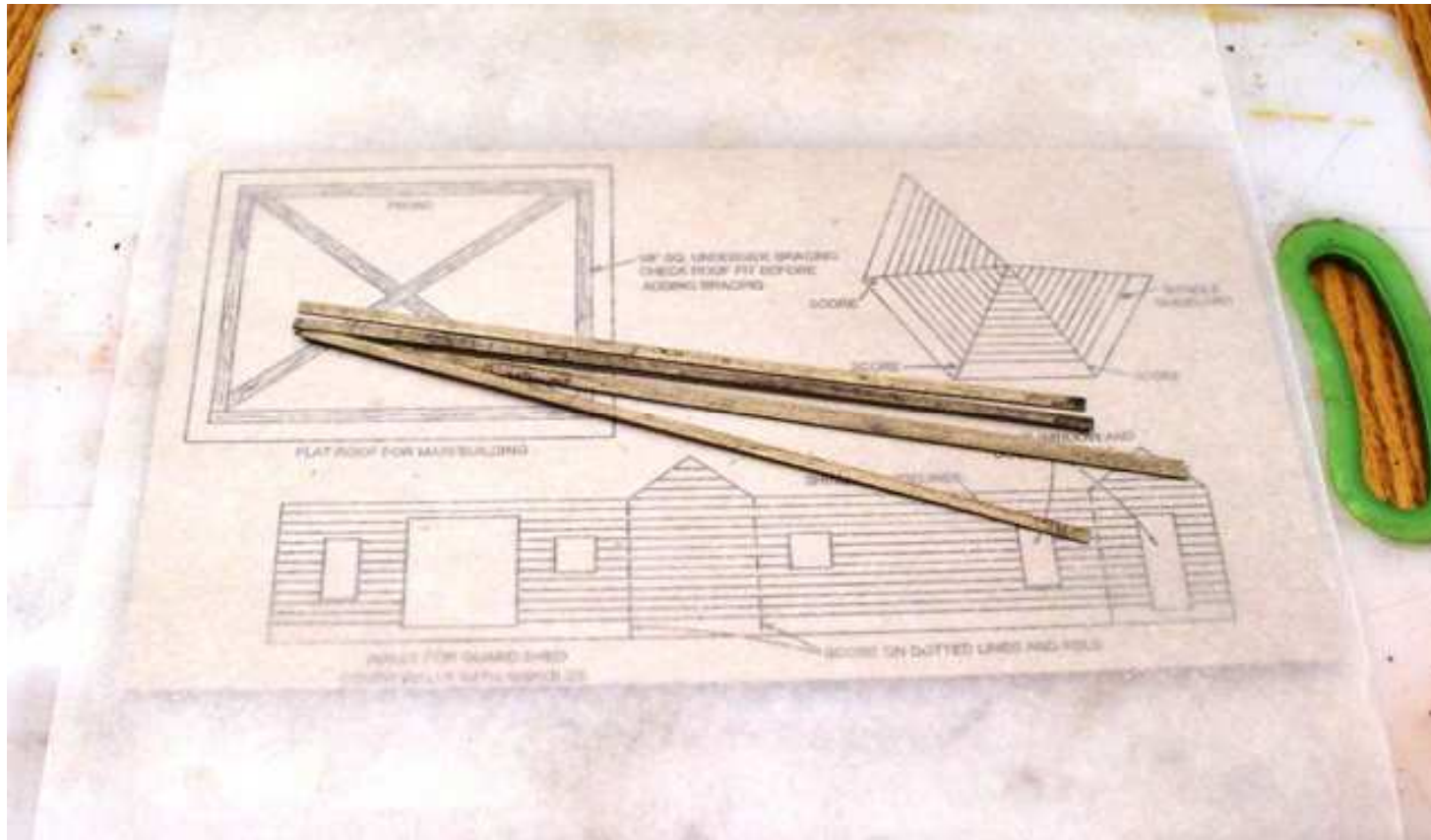
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## **Building Techniques & Tips**



# Building Techniques & Tips

Use the kit plans and templates....



Tape down the template & place wax paper over it so  
You can make a perfect frame every time.

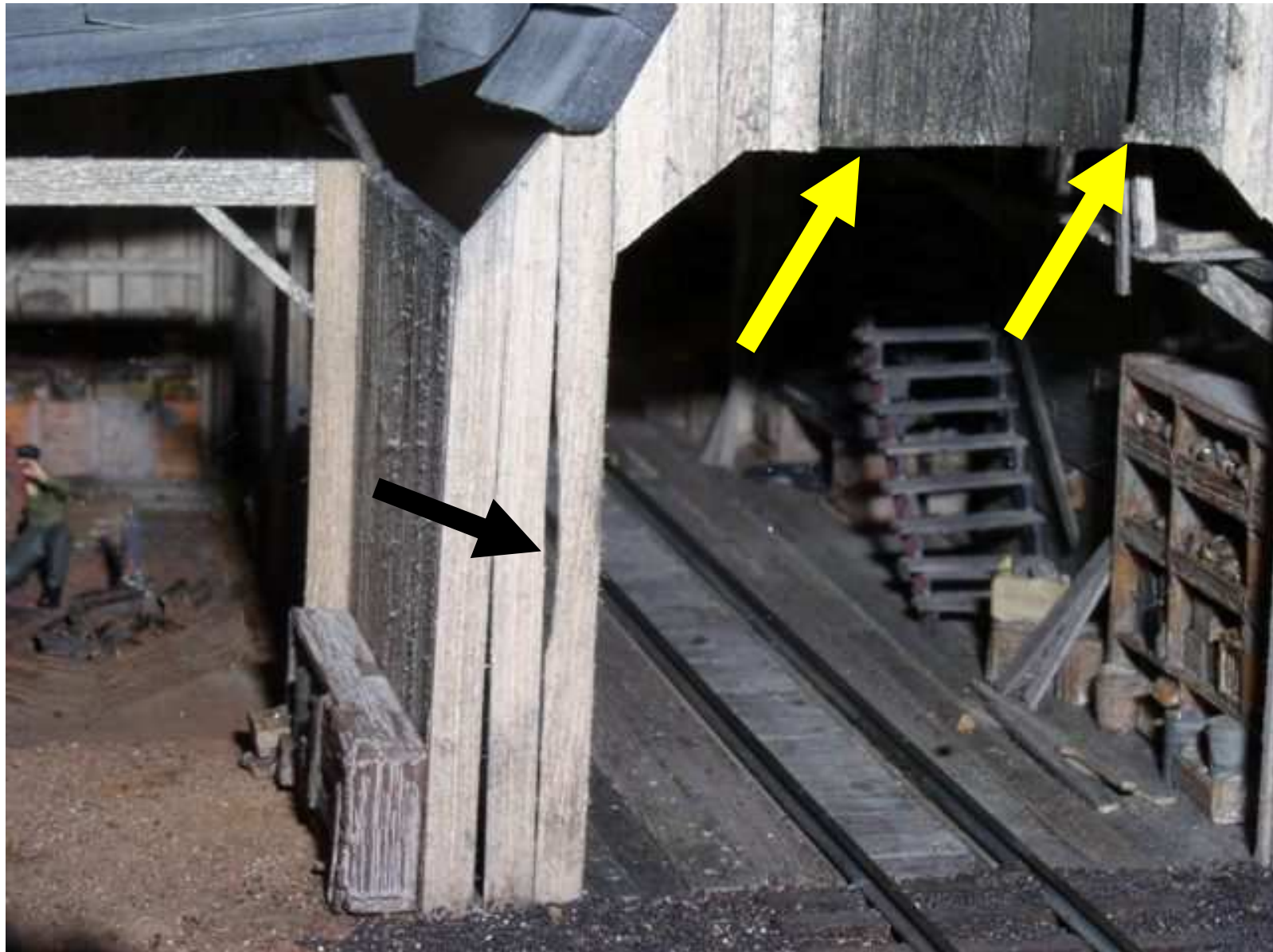


## Building Techniques & Tips

After dyeing the boards, scribe the wood grain into the surface, add knot holes, don't be afraid to damage some pieces.



## Building Techniques & Tips





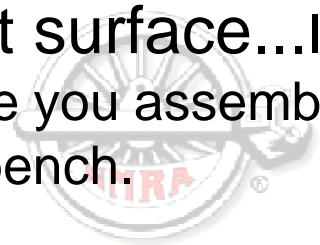
## Building Techniques & Tips





## Building Techniques & Tips

- Iron the instructions and templates...Nice flat paper is so much easier to work with OR
- Make a copy of your instructions and templates...Keeping the originals pristine condition is handy.
- Keeping your place in the instructions...Once your done with a particular step, place a check mark on it. If you have additional thoughts or steps you will need to do later, write a note. Review your instructions at the beginning of the build session and review your notes.
- Find photo's on the web of your kit built up...Not only are you seeing the finished product in color, but you can get other ideas on how other modelers built theirs.
- Work on walls while they can be placed on a flat surface...It is easier to place doors, windows, signs, stain, paint etc before you assembly the 4 walls. I use a 2' by 3' sheet of thick glass on my workbench.



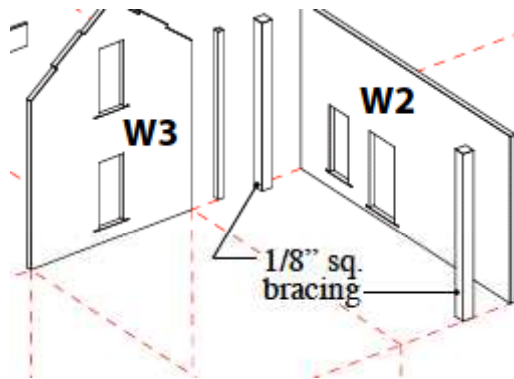
## Building Techniques & Tips



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## Building Techniques & Tips

- Fuzz free wood...Use a propane plumbers torch and burn the fuzz off, several FAST passes over the wood will burn off the fuzz.
- Brace up those laser cut walls!...I always over brace the inside walls to ensure that over time they will not curl up with the humidity.



- Keep heavy flat weights around...Once you stain or paint your laser cut walls place a flat clean weight on them so they will not curl up when they are drying. Machinist Angles are great for this.



## Building Techniques & Tips

- Aluminum Foil...Painted aluminum foil is great for mimicking fabric, such as clothes on the line, flags, overhangs, tarps etc..
- Modify those Emory boards...using scissors cut our Emory boards so that you can get into tight areas and for custom sanding.



- Lastly.... Sand not cut pieces to size...for those critical pieces use your cutting tool first then fine tune pieces by sanding them down to size.





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**Craftsman Kits can bring you great pleasure, enhance your modeling skills, and will be a great way to bridge your skills into scratch building.**

**THANKS!**

